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ABSTRACT

Designed for media specialists and educators, this issue reviews 19 short films produced between 1956 and 1978. Films range from 2 to 24 minutes in length and include both verbal and nonverbal live-action and animation films. Although most of the films are aimed at elementary-aged children, a few are also suitable for teenagers and adults. The reviews provide synopses of the films, reactions of children during field testing of the films, and recommendations concerning ages and programs the films might be best suited for. The films included in this supplement are screened to eliminate those that are patently sexist, racist, ageist, condescending, or unnecessarily violent. In addition, a sample copy of the evaluation tool used to document children's responses to the films is included. (LH)

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young viewers

Winter 1980 Issue (Volume 1, Number 2)

film review supplement

We thought if might be helpful for our readers to see the tool we use to gather information for this publication, so the center pages of this Film Review Supplement consist of a copy of the Media Center's Film/Audience Evaluation Form. MCC staff and evaluation interns use this form to document children's responses to films.

We also thought it might be helpful to clarify how we go about selecting films included herein. We do not evaluate didactic films because that would involve testing how well a film achieved its educational objectives -- a process we have neither the staff nor the time to do. MCC staff orders films from promotional fliers, distributors' catalogs, or when educators have recommended a particular work. MCC staff prescreens all films to eliminate those that are patently sexist, racist, ageist, condescending, or unnecessarily violent. If the film seems like it might be of interest to children on some level, we test it. We try to make no assumptions about what their responses will be; we attempt to find out on what level a film works with children -- if indeed it works at all. Unless we feel convinced that the film will not work without an introduction, we make no introduction to the films we test. If we have introduced it, we document what and how in our evaluation report.

Often we will evaluate films that we expect children will have some difficulty with, and we try films that were not made specifically for children, because we cannot predict or second-guess how they will respond.

Our evaluation process and our non-directive mode of questioning raises issues (such as the realism of SUN FLIGHT or the title of THE CHAMPION) which may not come up in other uses of the film. We report on them, however, because they shed light on children's comprehension of (or difficulty with aspects of) particular films. Hopefully, some of this information will apply to other films, perhaps films with similar treatments or films which use similar techniques.

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YOUNG VIEWERS/
FILM REVIEW SUPPLEMENT

Winter 1980 Issue (Volume 1, Number 2)

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Evaluation Sites in Manhattan:
Barnard School, The Basement Workshop in Chinatown, Baxter Street Day Care Center, Calhoun Learning Center, Cathedral School, Hunter College Elementary School, P.S. 75, P.S. 124 in Chinatown, and St. Luke's School.

Evaluation Sites outside Manhattan:
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington DE
Gill Elementary School, Gill MA
Grady School, Elmsford NY
St. Ann's School, Brooklyn NY
Mildred E. Strang Middle School, Yorktown Heights NY

PUBLICATION NEWS

What To Do When the Lights Go On, the most recent MCC publication on programming films with children, will be available in June 1980 from The Oryx Press, 2214 North Central Avenue, Phoenix AZ 85004. The comprehensive and helpful volume contains annotations of over 350 short 16mm films, step-by-step instructions for combining film with related arts activities, a checklist for programmers, extensive subject/activity indeces, film sources, and a lengthy and annotated bibliography.

NOTE: All films reviewed herein are color unless b&w is indicated.

THE CHAMPION 14 min Brown nonverbal liveaction 1978/USA (Jeff Brown)

The would-be romance of a jogger is the subject of this wryly comic film. In the opening scene, a young man dressed in a gray sweatsuit dashes down a Manhattan street (to a pulsating Irish folk tune). When he approaches the police road block which cuts off traffic from Central Park, he runs directly toward the barrier; but, instead of clearing it in a single bound, he clambers awkwardly over it.

The young man enters the park near the reservoir and sees a woman jogger dressed in red. He watches her as if in a trance. When she does warm-up stretches, he mimes her actions. Then, affecting nonchalance, he limbers up on a cyclone fence, only to discover when he stops that his "red lady" has run off.

Dawn's early light reveals the young man huddled near the spot where he had encountered the woman the day before. Perhaps symbolically, he is sporting a red-striped shirt. The "red lady" eventually appears and, as luck or guile would have it, she drops her scarf. After an earnest chase to return it to her -- a chase fraught with slapstick mishaps -- the young man returns to the park entrance. He places the scarf on the "red lady's" bike and hides in a nearby tree to watch what happens. When she finds the scarf, the young woman looks expectantly around; but, when she sees no one, she leaves.

Children as young as eight laughed throughout this poignant and Chaplinesque pantomime. They were greatly amused at the hero's bumbling bashfulness, and were delighted with the abundant slapstick. When asked what the film was about, one ten-year-old said, "a man who wanted to get in love, but she's not paying any attention". Many children were confused by the film's ironic title which derives, in part, from the final scene where the young man crosses the finish line of a marathon without actually having run in the race. Since kids said the man "was not a champion", we asked them what they would call the film. Among their suggestions were TOUGH LUCK, THE CHASE OF LOVE, THE LOSING CHAMPION, A WINNER (IN HIS MIND), THE RUNNING KLUTZ, LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, and LOVE ON THE RUN.

THE CHAMPION is a fine lead-in for activities dealing with body movement, storytelling, and values clarification. The film is great for programs on male-female relationships, romantic quests, urban life, self-image, sports, and social commentary (it takes an off-beat look at the jogging phenomenon). Very macho young men might have trouble with the male image in the film, but it generally works with ages eight and up. It's particularly appropriate for young adolescents. Ask them to create scenarios for the third day. Does the young man say hello? Will he overcome his shyness? Does the "red lady" make the first move?

S.R.

CHINO'S TALE 16 min Bosustow liveaction 1978/USA (Robert Deubel)

This heavily narrated production is a portrait of the relationship between Olive Mixter, a solitary and elderly woman, and her cat. The film opens with a shot of Olive (played by Maureen Stapleton) riding an adult-sized tricycle down a tree shaded road with a large orange and white tabby in the vehicle's front basket. Olive's voiceover narration says she wants to tell you about "the most important person in my life" -- a cat named Chino.

A flashback shows Olive arriving home in pouring rain and discovering a miserable, thoroughly soaked kitten on her doorstep. She tries to ignore the creature, explaining that she lost a cat (meaning it died) and "doesn't want to go through it all again". The kitten's plaintive mewing finally prevails, and as she brings the cat inside Olive tells herself that it's only for the night. "The last thing I wanted was to get involved." But involved she gets, and the kitten is soon eating from it's predecessor's dish.

The passage of fifteen years is illustrated by a succession of stills showing woman and cat together. Liveaction footage resumes on Chino's sixteenth birthday. Olive makes Chino a cake and holds his paw to the knife as she cuts the cake. After eating a piece of cake, the cat unexpectedly runs out of the kitchen.

Chino's behavior begins to change markedly. He ignores Olive's calls to come inside and is generally unresponsive, so Olive concludes there must be something wrong and bundles the cat off to a vet. The doctor, a young man, remarks that Chino is a very old cat; he recommends that the cat be "put to sleep". Olive, controlling her distress with difficulty, says that she, too, is old and demands, "Should I be put to sleep?". The vet decides to approach the problem from another angle and claps his hands next to the cat's ear. Chino doesn't respond. Triumphantly, the young doctor announces the cat's problem: Chino is deaf.

On their next visit, the veterinarian produces a hearing aid. He warns Olive that the cat might refuse to wear it, and they watch in suspense as the device is placed in Chino's ear. The cat immediately shakes it off -- a performance he repeats at each of the vet's subsequent attempts to insert the hearing aid. Finally, Olive decides she must reason with Chino; she puts the hearing aid on the cat and tells him that he'll have to wear it so they can talk together like they used to. The cat, apparently realizing that he can hear with the device in his ear, leaves it there. Olive and Chino ride off on her tricycle and, presumably, live happily together for the rest of their lives.

Although the production level is high, CHINO'S TALE is not very cinematic. One gets a feeling that the transition from book (by Mary Stolz) to film got stuck half-way, with each scene serving as a moving illustration of the narration.

Kids enjoyed this film, but they missed its point. When asked what the film was about, some said "a lady and a cat together" but most said it was simply "about a cat". Children were generally quite distressed at Olive's initial rejection of the cat -- a situation most adults could understand and sympathize with. Despite her narrated explanation, children couldn't understand why Olive didn't "want to get involved" because they would have been delighted to adopt a kitten. One Chinese boy who spoke limited English said that Olive was "careless" and, from a child's point of view, that is an accurate characterization (at least up to the point where she changes her mind).

The very concept of aging is difficult for children to grasp, but when the problems of an old woman are compared to those of a cat, children tend to see the cat's problems in high relief while the woman's recede into the background. We found it notable that not one child in any of our screenings mentioned euthanasia, by that or any other name, or the problems of being old. While they loved Chino, children seemed unconcerned with Olive Mixter's situation.

Interestingly, CHINO'S TALE does not try to make the viewer feel sorry for Olive (a questionable and very limited objective in terms of aging); rather it tries to let viewers see things from her perspective. Unfortunately, the way her point of view was handled may have created problems for child viewers. The woman's non-stop, past tense verbalization reduces the film, on some levels, to a monologue instead of a drama -- and all the dramatic action involved the cat. So, although Olive Mixter's characterization is quite sympathetic, she does not emerge as a person with any real dimension -- other than being a daffy old lady who bakes cakes for cats.

With strong direction on the part of the discussion leader, CHINO'S TALE could be used for talking about loneliness and old age. It's also fine for programs on animals and friendship. While the film appeals to children from the ages of seven through eleven, it might work with older kids -- and with elderly adults.

G.M.

CLEVER HIKOICHI 12 min Coronet
puppet animation 1974/Japan
(Gakken Productions)

Set in feudal Japan, this is a slow-moving folk-tale about a clever boy who outsmarts a wiley enemy as his elders look on in amazement. On their way to market their watermelons, Hikoichi and his sister encounter a worried old man outside the palace. The old man says that a rival kingdom, in the person of an official minister, has threatened war if the royal court cannot weigh a giant by using only a small scale.

The court is baffled but Hikoichi figures out that if the giant is placed on one side of a large balance and small stones are piled on the other balance until they match the giant's weight, the small stones can then be weighed a few at a time on a small scale.

The enemy minister is furious that the puzzle has been solved and immediately demands that the court solve another one: someone must engage the giant in combat using only long poles. Quick and light on his feet, Hikoichi uses speed rather than strength and defeats the clumsy giant. The foreign minister is further enraged; he demands the solution of yet one more puzzle before the threat of war will be withdrawn. A heavy boulder must be placed on the giant's shoulders (even the giant shudders at the idea).

Undaunted, Hikoichi and his sister dig a trench in front of and under the boulder -- a trench as deep as the height of the giant's shoulders. When Hikoichi announces that the rock is ready to be placed on the giant's shoulders, the giant refuses to accept the burden. Hikoichi quickly says, "Whatever the servant cannot do, the master must." To everyone's delight, the enemy minister runs away.

Younger children might have difficulty following the plot or understanding the mathematical solutions to the puzzles, but seven to nine-year-olds particularly enjoyed the story. They thought it was very funny and loved the idea that a child saved his country. Some said it reminded them of the story of David and Goliath.

The puppet production was quite elaborate, but we were disappointed that the film was so dependent on the continuous narration. We were also confused by the choice of narrator; the story, although narrated by a male, is told from the point of view of Hikoichi's sister.

CLEVER HIKOICHI can be used with box art and puppetry activities. It's fine for ages six to nine, and with sophisticated pre-school children.

S.R.

DRAGONFLY 22 min Kauffmann liveaction and animation 1978/USA (Ellen Boyce)

Shot in Boston's Chinatown, this is a film about an Asian-American boy and his grandfather. Jimmy, who often visits his grandfather to watch him make origamis, invites two non-Asian schoolmates to his grandfather's apartment for lunch one day. The boys find the grandfather seated on a mat, as usual, busily folding paper.

Jimmy loves his grandfather and admires his handiwork, but his friends are uncomfortable with the quiet delicacy of the origamis. They take a dragonfly, the most complicated and beautiful of the old man's creations, and rip it to pieces. His grandfather is hurt, and Jimmy, too mortified to say anything, leaves with his friends.

Later, Jimmy returns and apologizes to his grandfather. Together, they make another dragonfly. When they are finished the old man snaps his fingers and (with the help of animation) the dragonfly flies. It soars through the open window and down the street. Jimmy's destructive friends see it and are duly impressed.

While DRAGONFLY is visually pleasing and portrays an affectionate relationship between a boy and his grandfather, it tries -- unsuccessfully -- to do too many things. The film supposedly portrays positive aspects of Asian culture, but no particular culture is identified. Jimmy and his grandfather are apparently Chinese, but the grandfather is shown making origami objects -- origami is a Japanese art form. This blurring of Asian cultural distinctions seems to reinforce the terrible stereotype that they are all alike.

There are other problems, too. The dialogue is stilted, and the grandfather seems rather young and far too vigorous to be spending all his time making origamis. But the film's most serious flaw has to do with concept and plot resolution: while it attempts a realistic treatment for most of the film, the sudden switch to magic at the end does not in any way resolve Jimmy's dilemma over how to handle the question of his friends' negative action. Are we supposed to believe that Asian-Americans resolve social and cultural conflicts with magic?

We screened DRAGONFLY in Manhattan's Chinatown as well as with non-Asian groups. The confusion of cultures did not seem to disturb the Chinese-American children, although it did bother their Chinese-American teacher. However, despite the fact that in discussions afterwards the groups in Chinatown thought that the boy was Chinese, they labeled the film as "Japanese" and many pulled out books half-way through the screening and read them until the film ended.

The film did not succeed in holding the undivided attention of non-Asian groups, although they were quite interested in the origami and wanted to learn more about it. We haven't figured out how to introduce the film without raising confusing issues; however, we do feel that if you use the film the cultural mix-up must be explained. The film can perhaps best be used as an introduction to origami activities with seven to ten-year-olds, but it is not an appropriate work for programs on Asian culture.

G.M.

FANTABIBLICAL 11 min Distribution 16
nonverbal animation 1977/Italy
(Guido Manuli)

Something like a fractured fairytale, this colorful and irreverent cartoon uses fantasy and satire as well as science fiction and bible motifs to create an allegory about technology and human nature. The space-age paraphernalia and the electronic acid rock score give a feeling, as one ten-year-old said, that the film is "out of this world".

It begins with the image of a monster or fiend whose mouth opens as if to speak. Instead, its open mouth reveals a door which, in turn, opens on the first "chapter". Adam and Eve are sitting on an asteroid, giggling under an apple tree. When they bite into the shining apple proffered by a snake which slithers around the tree trunk, they promptly grow Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck heads. A witch steps from behind the tree (the snake was her hand puppet) and as she takes off powered by her jet back-pack, she laughs an evil laugh.

A slow pan through space brings another asteroid into sight -- an asteroid notable for one extremely tall building. A man hurriedly exits and carries a huge wooden bird below the horizon. A jeering crowd gathers to watch as the man returns to the building and, with a variety of animals in tow, disappears over the side of the asteroid. Soon, Noah's ark/rocket blasts off. A huge faucet, which had been hidden inside the building, floods the entire asteroid.

While Moses spreads a meal for himself on a mountain top of yet another asteroid, a spaceship is destroyed by a meteorite. Tables containing the ten commandments fall next to the cowering prophet. When Moses finally touches various knobs on the tables, various food dishes appear; however, when he is not able to pay the bill (table also means account), Moses is thrown from the mountain and relates his experience to several onlookers.

The final story is a capsule "life of Christ" -- with Christ shown here as an astronaut. His birth, the visit of the magi, miracles (such as turning bad water into wine), and his crucifixion are all included. Throughout this "New Testament" sequence, the astronaut carries a small space-age gadget which helps him with the miracles. After his death, it falls into the hands of Roman guards. Pontius Pilate appears on television, washing his hands for all to see, as the planet becomes littered with gadgets and garbage and shrinks to the size of an asteroid.

A door shuts and the monster is seen again. Like the Cheshire cat, all it leaves behind is a smile -- a vaguely sinister smile which suggests that, even in the Space Age, history will repeat itself.

Although it was not made for children, we were curious to know how young viewers would respond to this satirical and highly visual work. While most groups enjoyed watching it, they evaluated FANTABIBLICAL in very black and white terms. One group of eight-year-olds thought the film was made "to teach the bible in a fun way to people who never read it"; but some nine-year-olds found it anti-religious because "it made the bible a big joke". A group of gifted seven and eight-year-olds said the film did not tell the "exact stories" as they recalled them; they asked to see it again and during the second screening they excitedly anticipated their favorite parts.

Because of the way its apparently religious subject is treated, FANTABIBLICAL needs careful handling. It is ambivalent and too complex for many young viewers; with some exceptions, they either didn't get it or only got part of it.

While the film can work with sophisticated groups from age seven up, it is perhaps most suitable for teenagers and adults who can better appreciate its subtleties and biting humor. FANTABIBLICAL is a fine lead-in to discussions on contemporary values, media and technology, ecology, and social issues. It also works well in programs on science fiction, storytelling, film studies, satire, and fantasy.

S.R.

FIRE 9 min EBE nonverbal
paint animation 1975/Poland (Witold Giersz)

A stunning visualization of the life, destruction, and rebirth of a forest, done in an impressionistic, impasto paint animation. The film opens on a pastoral scene where butterflies, deer, hare, squirrels, wild boar, cuckoos, woodpeckers, and other creatures move through a verdant forest undergrowth.

The modern jazz accompaniment becomes gradually louder and insistent, breaking into sirens and kettledrums when fire erupts (and the title appears for the first time). Animals flee as shifting impasto flames leap about them. A doe runs past an onlooking wolf who, intent upon the fire, turns and flees the burning forest. A black bull charges in panic through the red flames and dark smoke as branches crash to the ground.

The fire burns itself out after a while, and heavy gray storm clouds bring rain and lightning -- accompanied by a reed instrumentation. The once thriving forest has been devastated; however, soon -- among the charred tree stumps -- a pale green seedling pushes gingerly upward and flowers, bringing a note of color to the blackened earth and signalling the forest's rebirth.

Despite its potentially frightening subject, children did not respond to FIRE on an emotional level. This is probably due to its abstract qualities -- the images are highly stylized and there is no real plot. Although the sequence of events is quite linear, neither the cause of the fire nor the fate of the animals is revealed; furthermore, the animals are not humanized, so FIRE evokes none of the terror that a BAMBI does.

However, like SOIR DE FETE, this was not an easy film for children to discuss. They appeared excited and fascinated by the technique but were disappointed in the "story". Many evaluated it primarily on the level of plot in discussions which followed the screenings. Some groups might have been more receptive if we had told them beforehand that FIRE didn't have a real story; it was more like a moving painting.

In addition to our classroom testings, FIRE was shown in a museum in conjunction with an exhibit of abstract expressionist works. Children aged six to twelve were asked to create their own impasto paintings after seeing the film; although many said they "didn't like it", their artwork clearly demonstrated that FIRE helped them understand impasto technique and encouraged them to use paint in new ways.

We have screened FIRE in family programs with children as young as two years old. It makes an interesting addition to environmental programs and can also be used with over-tens as a lead-in to discussions on ecology and nature studies.

As a stimulus for activities which explore color, mood, and texture, it's an outstanding film for children eight and over -- particularly if you encourage your group to verbalize what is happening, and to talk about the colors, during the screening.

G.M.

THE ICE WITCH 19 min MFI cel animation
1961/Probably produced in the USSR

This elaborate animation tells the story of the trials a brother and sister endure to save their mother from a cruel witch. Although the narrator says that the characters are "Eskimo", their costumes and a reference to Viking spirits indicate they are probably Lapp.

Archook and Noola live alone with their mother in the Arctic. Both children are lazy; Noola, moreover, is vain and particularly proud of her long black braid. One day, when their mother asks them to get some firewood, the children remain inside squabbling while the woman gathers the wood herself and lights the morning fire. The cruel Ice Witch, who hates warmth, passes nearby and a spark from the fire burns her veil. In rage, the witch turns the mother into a dove and brings her to the Ice Palace where (returned to human form) she is told to make the witch a new veil.

The children regret their behavior and, now that they must fend for themselves, realize how much they need and miss their mother. Archook decides that they must find her, so brother and sister set off, accompanied by their puppy who (in typical cartoon fashion) provides comic relief throughout the journey. The Sun Spirit gives Archook two magic arrows and the children head for the great frozen palace.

Warned that the children are coming, the Ice Witch orders the Sandman to put them to sleep. But, just as the children and their dog are curling up to sleep forever in the snow, their mother's emissary -- a bird -- wakes them up and guides them toward the palace.

When they come to a high peak, the rope Archook brought proves too short, so Noola cuts off her braid; once it has been added to the rope, the line just reaches the top. Then, with the help of the sun's magic arrows, the Ice Witch and her veil of darkness are destroyed, and the children rescue their mother.

The old-fashioned male narrator is moralizing and, at times, simply gratuitous. "This is the frozen North," he says over images of frozen tundra; "It is snowing," he says as it starts to snow. And, despite the fact that Noola comes through in the end, Archook, the boy, takes the initiative.

Nonetheless, kids thoroughly enjoyed THE ICE WITCH. They were enthralled with the dramatic story and applauded at the end. Six to nine-year-olds, in particular, found the storyline gripping. One second grade girl said, "It reminded me of a dream I had where my mother went out shopping and never came back so my friend and I went looking for her but we didn't find her." Our audiences also commented on the animation, which they liked a great deal; they were able to recall many specific images when the lights came on.

THE ICE WITCH is a natural for family programs -- although you might try to balance it with a less talky film and combine it with one that has a more positive female child character (such as A VISIT FROM SPACE, IN THE JUNGLE THERE IS LOTS TO DO, or A LITTLE GIRL AND THE GUNNY WOLF). The film works very well as a lead-in to discussing dreams and fantasies, as well as to activities dealing with character studies and role playing. Fine for storytelling and folktale programs with children from ages five through ten.

G.M.

IMPASSE 10 min Phoenix nonverbal collage animation 1978/USA (Caroline and Frank Mouris)

A visual tour de force, this nonverbal collage animation (made entirely of Avery labels) plays with color, form, and transformation -- and delights the viewer in the process. Although it is abstract and essentially plotless, the film has a definite sense of drama as a red Avery arrow tries to bypass a white Avery dot (the arrow's nemesis) and get through a whole maze of Avery labels of every size, shape, and color (primary and secondary). The images are accompanied by an insistent tabla-like percussion which adds to the sense of urgency and makes the whole thing resemble a dance.

Children responded quite noticeably to IMPASSE, tapping to the rhythm and commenting on the changing patterns ("worms" - "a freeway" - "checkers"). We showed it without any introduction and children were eager to know what the title meant. After the screening, one class ran to their dictionaries to look it up; another group decided in discussion that it meant "impossible to pass."

The film works best as a direct lead-in to paper design, collage, or movement activities. It's great in programs dealing with change and transformation, and would also work well as an introduction to filmmaking since the technique is easy to understand and something which kids, on a limited basis, could imitate. When using IMPASSE in a program, be careful what you follow it with; it could leave children too energized to sit through a quiet film. Great fun for people of all ages -- from three on up.

G.M.

THE INCREDIBLE SAN FRANCISCO ARTISTS' SOAPBOX DERBY 24 min Phoenix liveaction 1977/USA (Amanda Pope)

What, are our eyes deceiving us? Is this car made from bread? Is that big banana really a car? How about that pencil? In this documentary on the 1977 soapbox derby of the title, over one-hundred Bay area artists exhibit the vehicles they designed and constructed -- vehicles which are as varied as the artists and which range from a tennis shoe to body parts.

By combining footage of the derby itself with stills and footage of the works in progress, the film details the cars' evolution. The voiceover narration, by participating artists, explains how they approached the task of designing a "soapbox" car. One woman, for example, had to multiply recipes for pumpernickle and white bread to make her car; then she had to find a bakery with ovens large enough to bake her "Edible Special" which was eaten by the crowd after the derby. The best part of the film is the actual race; assorted cars and drivers individually roll down (or up) a steep San Francisco hill to the accompaniment of a lively piano rag.

We preceded THE INCREDIBLE SAN FRANCISCO... with VERY PLUSH, a sixty-second Amtrak commercial which involves a spoof of train spy movies. After a brief discussion of VERY PLUSH, we told kids that we had a spy assignment for them: they were to go to a soapbox derby in California and steal ideas for the most imaginative car they could design. We supplied them with pencils and paper and screened the film.

Kids as young as eight were delighted with it, alternately making comments and sketching furiously. After the screening, we told children to design their own cars. Generally, our groups were more eager to draw than to discuss the film, and they paid more attention to the vehicles (with a little help from our introduction) than to the artists' voiceover narration which, although quite appropriate for older audiences, might not have interested children.

(continued on page 10)

FILM/AUDIENCE EVALUATION FORM

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FILM TITLE _____ DISTRIBUTOR _____

SCREENING SITE _____ EVALUATOR _____

AGES OF KIDS _____ GRADES _____ SIZE OF GROUP _____ DATE _____

Observe and record children's behavior during screening. Write down their comments and spontaneous questions and/or debates, as well as their nonverbal responses. Note during which parts of the film they are particularly attentive, restless, silent, laughing, crying, standing up, imitating on-screen movement, responding to music or content, etc.

When the film ends, ask the following questions. Some questions do not apply to particular films, and some questions may be answered before you ask them. You may change the order; however, do not do the "grading" until the very end.

- When you close your eyes and think of the film, what do you see in your mind?
- Do you have some ideas of what the film was about?
- How did the film make you feel? Why?
- What do you think /feel about the sounds in the film? Why?
- Does the film remind you of anything? (If no response, suggest: your life, a painting, a book, another film, TV.)
- Was it easy or hard to understand the film? Why?
- Overall, what do you think about the way the film was made?
- Why do you think the filmmaker made this film?
- If you could, what would you change about the film? Please explain why.
- If you were grading this film, would you give it an A (for super), a B (good), a C (okay), or an F (terrible)? (Indicate how many voted for each grade.)

- Did kids enjoy the film? Did some (boys/girls, older/younger) enjoy it more than others?
- What aspects of the film particularly interested and/or disturbed the children?

- Did they understand the film? _____ Did they have any questions about its content or technique? Explain
- Did the subject or theme interest this group? _____ Why or why not?

- How did kids react to the film's style or technique?
- How did kids react to the film's pace?
- Were the values and/or behavior of the film's characters appropriate for this group? _____ Why?
- Were the filmmaker's values or concepts appropriate for this group? _____ Why?
- Was the film, as a whole, appropriate for this group? _____ Explain why.

- Does it require an introduction beforehand or an explanation afterwards? _____ Which and why?
- Would you use this film again with this or a similar group? _____ Explain why.
- Would it have been better for (circle one) an older a younger group? Why?
- Did the film center and energize the children?
- What activities could you do with this film?
- How would you use this film?
- What was the point of the film? _____ Was there a message? _____ If so, what?
- Was there continued interest and/or curiosity about the film at a later date?

In the space below, summarize the children's responses to the film and make a brief evaluation of the film's impact on this group. Analyze both their verbal and nonverbal responses. For instance, were their verbal responses more or less negative than their during-the-screening behavior? Did they have difficulty discussing the film? If so, why? Mention any situations which may have affected their response to the film -- weather, fatigue, hunger, holidays, etc.

Some children designed cars made out of food: a hamburger, an ice cream cone, a box of corn flakes. Others moved into the area of science fiction, designing spaceships and rockets. Some made combinations of car parts seen in the film: a pencil-point hood, a banana tailfin, a lounge chair body. One girl designed "The Luxury Hotel that Flies" which had every kind of creature comfort imaginable -- including a swimming pool and a toy room.

Although it wasn't made for children, THE INCREDIBLE SAN FRANCISCO... has great possibilities for follow-up activities with children eight and older. It's an excellent lead-in to graphic design, box art, assemblage, and sculpting with food or clay. But, we strongly suggest you prescreen the film first to see if you think the erotic car will cause problems; our groups seemed to ignore it (a few called it "sick") and were much more interested in vehicles made to represent pencils, tennis shoes, peanuts, etc.

S.R.

KUUMBA SIMON'S NEW SOUND 8 min
Beacon cutout animation 1978/USA
(Bob Bloomberg, Jane Aaron)

This engaging and unusual cutout animation tells how Simon, a black boy from Trinidad, invented a new musical instrument. The narrated introduction explains that in Swahili kuumba means creativity.

As the film begins, carnival is only days away and Simon has not yet found an instrument to play in the great annual parade. As his sister, mother, and father prepare for the festivities, Simon raps and taps on every object he encounters to see if one will make the right sound. He tries a comb, bottles, and rocks in his search. He takes his father's hammer and earnestly tests pieces of wood until his father takes the materials to make a float; Simon sighs and says, "It wasn't right, anyway." He wanders into the kitchen and starts banging on a precarious jumble of pots and dishes. His mother points out that he can't use the pots because she needs them for cooking. "Oh well," says Simon, "that wasn't it either."

On the very eve of carnival, Simon still has not found the right instrument. As night falls, storm clouds roll in and a dejected Simon leans on his windowsill to watch the rain fall. The first drop hits an empty oil drum. It makes a distinctive, resonant sound and Simon's eyes open wide -- "That's it!" Simon stays up all night, making various sized dents in the top of the oil drum with a hammer. In the morning, his family wakes to the lilting sound of calypso music played on what we now call a steel drum.

The film ends with a wonderful parade sequence. Giant candies, oversized ice cream cones, wolves, and creatures with strange masks dance in celebration. The narrator (who hasn't spoken since the introduction) explains that the steel drum is now the national instrument of Trinidad.

All the characters in the film are black and they are presented as competent and supportive of each other. The colorful artwork was, in fact, created by black children, although the animation was done by adults (in much the same way that A LITTLE GIRL AND THE GUNNY WOLF and ALEXANDER AND THE CAR WITH THE MISSING HEADLIGHT were done). In KUUMBA..., however, there is a real choreography, a sophisticated and dancelike manipulation of the child-made images.

KUUMBA... was a blockbuster with our urban audiences, both black and white. Kids were actively involved throughout; they moved to the music and had lots to say afterwards. When we showed it to several groups in rural Massachusetts, however, it got a slightly less enthusiastic response. The rural children did not respond physically to the music; even after seeing the film they were confused about what a steel drum was -- some thought the music had been played on a piano. While one group of city kids had a long debate about the characters' accents ("they sounded Jamaican"), the rural groups seemed quite unfamiliar with the accent.

All our audiences commented on the primitive quality of the animation. They particularly mentioned that the characters' arms weren't always attached to their bodies. That sort of "detachment" apparently bothers seven to ten-year-olds; they comment about it in Evelyn Lambart's films also. However, there is something to be said for the artwork's primitive quality. Not only was it made by children, it does not overwhelm young viewers the way very slick techniques do. Many children felt they could do as well as or better than the filmmakers.

KUUMBA... is excellent for programs on music, holidays, or problem solving. It's fantastic, too, for costume or maskmaking activities, collage, and filmmaking, although it may need an introduction if you screen it with young viewers who are unfamiliar with Caribbean cultures. An outstanding film for ages five and up.

G.M.

THE LEGEND OF THE PARAMO 23 min
Phoenix liveaction 1972-77/USA
(Ray Witlin)

This Colombian legend takes place in the Andes when mule trains were the primary means of transporting goods and supplies across the high mountain passes. The printed titles introducing it read: "Mule drivers became legendary figures who had to face harsh weather and the phantom who roamed the Paramo."

THE LEGEND OF THE PARAMO is the story of a twelve-year-old apprentice mule driver's first journey through the dangerous pass called the Paramo. The journey comes to a temporary halt when the master driver breaks his leg. (In an unusual silent film technique, actors pantomime while the narrator describes what is happening.) The situation becomes further complicated when the apprentice's mule runs away. While searching for his runaway mount, the boy is startled by a strange man whose whistle brings the mule back. When the boy turns to look again at the man (who we've seen briefly once before, but the boy has not), the stranger has mysteriously disappeared.

His master remains in a village to recuperate and the boy takes the mule train on alone. All goes well until he stops to get a closer look at the picture on a roadside grave; it is a photograph of the stranger who whistled for the runaway mule.

When the boy returns to where he left the pack mules, all of them -- including his mount -- have disappeared. He desperately follows the sound of bells, thinking they are his mules, and soon becomes lost in the Paramo. In a series of quick cuts, strange flashes of color, and odd camera angles, the boy is shown stumbling across the altiplano. Apparently pursued by the phantom, the boy attacks large succulent plants in fear and/or rage.

Exhausted, the young mule driver falls asleep for a short time -- only to wake up and find the stranger confronting him. They duel with machetes in a highly ritualistic way and the stranger falls as if dead. When the boy approaches him, however, the stranger laughs and says, "I am not the phantom of the Paramo; the real phantom is fear."

The plot seems to have been conceived of as a shell game; unfortunately, the sleight-of-hand just doesn't work. Most children were unclear about the sequence of events and they did not understand what happened when the boy was wandering through the Paramo. One seven-year-old said, "Things didn't make sense; first there was whistling and then he was running through the desert cutting up things."

The pantomime acting, which in better hands could have been an interesting technique, puts the burden of plot development on the voiceover narration. A nine-year-old who apparently did not pay attention to the narrator summarized the story this way: "Three men had to go somewhere; one died and the horses were lost. Finally, they saw one of the horses. Then they started a fight because the boy thought he (the stranger) was mad."

Despite its problems, we had hopes for it since there are so few films about South America. Here was a story about a South American lifestyle, starring Colombians, set in the arresting Colombian Andes, and featuring an adolescent boy.

We introduced THE LEGEND... by telling kids they might find parts of it scary. One group of seven-year-olds was delighted to hear this and kept trying to determine which was the scary part; they decided, finally, that it must have been the duel. A group of fourth graders, however, was disappointed that "it wasn't really scary". Perhaps another introduction would have been more effective; it might be better to discuss what a phantom is before seeing the film and suggest kids watch carefully for evidence of a phantom when they see the film. Whether or not the stranger was the phantom became a subject of debate with some groups, and what could have been an interesting exploration on the topic of fear degenerated into an analysis of the film's disconcerting techniques.

Children who could suspend their disbelief or who perhaps put more weight on the narrator's summary seemed to have an easier time accepting the story's resolution; those who paid more attention to the visuals had difficulty figuring out what happened. In our experience, THE LEGEND OF THE PARAMO worked best with seven to nine-year-olds. Ten and eleven-year-olds thought it was "dumb". It can be used in programs about fantasies or fears, legends, South America, and journeys; but it is a difficult film, so program it carefully.

S.R.

LIZARD 11 min Films Inc nonverbal liveaction 1970/West Germany (Institut fur Film und Bild)

"Do they eat spiders?" asked a five-year-old girl during a screening of LIZARD.

"Yes!" responded a boy.

"Do they eat ladybugs?"

"Yes!"

"Well then," the girl concluded, "I don't like them."

These comments were made as kids watched this meditative and nicely shot study of the life cycle of the lizard -- a creature which apparently spends much of its time eating. The film, a highly visual and nonverbal work, shows lizards licking dew from leaves and eating a number of insects, including water bugs, spiders, beetles, caterpillars, and a butterfly. There is an encounter with a snail and a mating scene, after which the female is shown laying eggs. The eggs hatch and the young lizards start hunting insects immediately. Winter comes and the lizards are shown in a rather dormant state with their eyes closed.

Children greatly enjoyed LIZARD and talked throughout. The comments made by a bright kindergarten class pretty well summarize the film:

"Camouflage!"

"He's licking off the water."

"Why isn't the music like it was before?"

"Aw, poor things!" (as the lizard consumed other creatures)

"They're eating off each other... They're playing hide and seek. They're mating each other."

"That's a egg! That's what they were doing -- they were mating."

"That's a female. She's doing another one."

"They're gonna hatch. Ew, yuck! There's the yolk."

"He's cute!" (about a newly hatched lizard)

"I feel like I have a worm in my mouth." (when the young lizard eats a worm)

Enthusiastic clapping as the film ended.

We thought the score would be distracting, but kids were so noisily involved with the on-screen happenings that they didn't pay much attention to the music. Active discussions followed the screenings and kids debated at some length whether lizards were "mean" because they ate bugs and butterflies; one boy pointed out that "lizards have to eat, too."

The film leaves much room for observation and speculation on the part of young viewers (which is something we rate very highly), and although some children expressed a wish that "it told you more" we think such expressions have more to do with their expectations of an educational film (and with the fact that we showed the film outside of a nature studies context) rather than with a disappointment in the film itself. They were, by and large, quite energized by the need to come up with their own explanations.

LIZARD is great for programs on food, nature studies, and ecology but it could also be used quite effectively as a lead-in to body movement activities. It's a fairly slow-paced and quiet film, so program it accordingly. Fine for ages four through ten; it might also work with older groups.

G.M.

LUMAAQ: AN ESKIMO LEGEND 7 min NFBC b&w nonverbal in effect cutout animation 1975/Canada (Co Hoedeman)

LUMAAQ... was translated directly from an oral format to film with the help of an Eskimo graphic artist and an Eskimo storyteller. The titles that begin this challenging black and white folktale say:

> A snow-blind boy is cruelly rejected by his own mother. For the wrong she does him, he takes revenge.

From then on, the story is told -- at least for those who do not understand Inuktituk -- in a highly visual manner with images derived from the drawings of Davitialuk Amituk, a Povungnituk Eskimo from Northern Quebec. Here and there, a solo jew's-harp is used as a musical instrument.

Rather than a simple tale of revenge, however, we feel this is a cautionary tale for parents, a warning not to neglect their children. The story unfolds as a woman (distinguished by her decorative face markings) tells her children -- a pre-adolescent girl and a snow-blind young man -- the story of how she once rode the great seals. Suddenly, there is a noise outside the igloo; a hungry bear is looking for food. The family dog approaches the bear and barks at it. Meanwhile, the snow-blind young man reaches for his bow and shoots an arrow through an opening in the igloo.

His arrow hits the bear and kills it; but, when his mother looks out to see what has happened, she lies and tells her son that he killed the dog. Later on, mother and daughter retrieve the bear. They drag it away, skin it, and cut up the meat. The young hunter, unaware of how he has been tricked, languishes by himself, although his sister sneaks him some meat she hid in her parka.

The seasons change and the ice begins to thaw. The young man, deserted by his mother and sister, sleeps alone in the melting igloo. He sleeps naked under his parka and leggings because it is now too warm to wear them. Two loons fly by and discover in a conversation with him that the young man cannot see. They have compassion for him and magically, by throwing him into the water, restore his sight. (The same motif was also used in THE LOON'S NECKLACE.)

The young man sets out to find his mother. When he arrives at her new summer house, he is surprised to see the bearskin on the wall; instead of confronting his mother directly, however, he pretends that he is still blind. After a short conversation, he asks her help in hunting seals. She ties a rope, attached at the other end to his harpoon, around her waist and together they go to the water's edge. The hunter shoots a large seal and, because the rope is tied to her waist, his mother is pulled into the water by the swiftly moving creature.

The young man has given his mother a ride on the seals -- just as she said she did in the beginning of the film. The story has come full circle, but in the process the selfish mother has been trapped in her own lies and the young hunter/hero has surmounted his handicaps.

LUMAAQ... is not an easy film, but children understood it better and quicker than we did. We had to prescreen it two times to get what some kids got on their first viewing. It is, by the way, much clearer after two viewings and definitely requires an introduction. We tested LUMAAQ... by introducing it as a black and white film told in an Eskimo dialect; we suggested that if children listened to the characters' tone of voice and watched the screen carefully, they could probably figure out what was going on. With some groups, we also suggested that kids watch the characters' eyes for clues.

Most children found the storyline confusing. It would have helped greatly if we had screened the film, briefly discussed it, and immediately screened it a second time. Children seemed to accept the theme of revenge as part of the tale, perhaps because simply figuring out the sequence of events was so demanding (and, for many, apparently intriguing); but, perhaps they had little to say about the issue because the mother's behavior was so obviously reprehensible. Typically, they were much more concerned about the fate of the children and had many questions about different details ("what was on the mother's face?" and "why was the boy kicked out of his house?"). Their questions not only helped clarify what the film was about, they also led to interesting discussions of Eskimo culture and values.

Children were unfamiliar with the film's primitive art style and commented on the different proportions of various images -- most notably the loons which were unusually large compared to the people. While this proportional variation actually came about because the original Eskimo drawings were made on paper of different sizes, the loon's size makes sense on another level if you consider that they were supernatural creatures.

What kids had the most difficulty with also involved a question of proportion. The titles mention a "snow-blind boy" but since the young hunter is as tall as his mother, many children assumed he was her husband and thought the sister (who is shorter than either mother or brother) was the boy/protagonist. To avoid this sort of confusion, we suggest you introduce the film by paraphrasing the printed titles and identifying who the three characters are. You could say something like "This is the story of a snow-blind hunter, his selfish mother, and his younger sister".

LUMAAQ... is a challenging film for children nine and older. It is fabulous for film studies and filmmaking activities, as well as for programs on North American legends, Eskimos, folktales, and Native American art.

S.R.

NATURE MORTE AUX FRUITS 2 min
Perspective nonverbal cutout animation
1978/USA (Maxi Cohen)

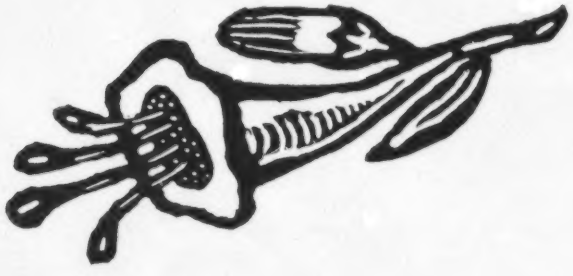
This zany cutout animation captures young viewers' attention right from the start as a Neopolitan still life painting becomes a feast for insects and larvae. The genteel should be forewarned: this buggy bacchanal is punctuated throughout with sounds of unmannerly eating -- sounds which the chamber music accompaniment cannot entirely disguise.

A bee enters, buzzing loudly, and slurps up the juice of several fruits. A caterpillar devours a bowl of strawberries with vulgar chomps. A butterfly drains a glass of wine, then turns green and hiccups. Nothing is left untouched, including the closing titles which the insatiable butterfly gobbles up as soon as they appear.

NATURE... greatly amused our audiences; they laughed and commented throughout. One boy thought the bugs were "desperate and must not have eaten for a long time." Some inner-city kids said the film reminded them of a New Year's Eve party. When asked what they thought the film was about, comments ranged from "how animals spoil food" to "it was meant to be a joke." One child summed it up: "They had a lot of fancy fruit, old-fashioned music, and bugs eating it all up -- that's wierd!"

NATURE... is a fine and nutty programmer; it will add humor to programs on art history, food, insects, ecology, change and transformation -- or almost anything. A great lead-in for filmmaking activities dealing with cutout animation, NATURE MORTE AUX FRUITS is appropriate for audiences of all ages.

S.R.



SOIR DE FÊTE 6 min MFI nonverbal
cameraless animation 1956/France
(Albert Pierru)

In this celebration of carnival night, shapes charge back and forth across the screen to the accompaniment of oom-pah-pah march music. The opening titles declare, in French, that this film was made "without camera" -- an animation technique first explored by Len Lye and later made famous by Norman McLaren, but given a special Gallic flavor in this evocative short.

Images were drawn, scratched, and painted directly on film leader. While many are abstract (fireworks, pulsating splotches of color, vertical stripes moving from one side of the screen to the other), there are also recognizable images. An occasional fish swims across the screen. A stick figure enters on the right, strenuously pulling on a line; it goes off-frame on the left and the other figure involved in what is evidently a tug-o-war enters on the right.

This delightful improvisation is also a serious exploration of the space defined by the projected image. Shapes converge from the four corners of the frame, appear in the center and explode outward, move from side to side, and spin in place.

Kids had very little to say about SOIR DE FÊTE, although they watched it with interest and called out the images they recognized. It's simply not the type of film they can easily discuss. We suggest you give your viewers magic markers and clear leader, or the makings of a flipbook, and let them respond to the film on a nonverbal level.

The film can also serve as an introduction to activities involving collage, painting, or movement. It's great for programs on music and celebrations. An upbeat programmer for ages three and up, it is helped if you encourage viewers to identify the images as they appear.

G.M.

STARCYCLE 4 min Morse line animation
1978/USA (Deanna Morse)

A playful, improvisational line animation, STARCYCLE catalogs the transformation of a star into everything from a television set to fireworks. The colorful images have a simple, child-like quality and young children's voices comment and create sound effects throughout, creating more of a mood than a narration.

When we showed STARCYCLE to first graders, we asked them to call out what they saw as the images appeared on the screen. Kids had great fun naming different things the star turned into; they called out color names, along with the child voices on the soundtrack, when the star turned different colors. Older groups were able to remember many different images from the film, but, in discussing it afterwards, quite a few children responded to it negatively and called it "dumb". However, when we asked them how they would change the film, these same children came up with all sorts of imaginative suggestions -- suggestions which seemed not to be criticisms, but creative ideas for making their own films.

STARCYCLE is a pleasant programmer and is probably most effective as a direct lead-in (without discussion) to drawing and flipbook activities. Fine for ages three to seven as is. Older kids might think it "babyish" unless you run it without the soundtrack; as a silent film, it's fine for children seven and older as an introduction to filmmaking.

G.M.

STILL LIFE 5 min Schneider nonverbal liveaction 1972/USA (Rosalind Schneider)

This simple experimental film has a sculptural quality and examines a variety of objects at very close range. Sliced red cabbage and different types of seashells are explored with a slowly panning camera and shot in both hard and soft focus.

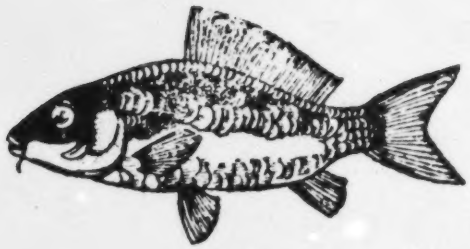
We introduced STILL LIFE by asking children to pretend they had shrunk to a height of six inches; we also suggested they shout out what the images looked like or reminded them of. Some seven to nine-year-olds "saw" flowers and spiders or body parts such as heart, brain, stomach; one girl said, "Maybe that's what we look like inside." Other children said the images reminded them of lava, a cave, and being underwater. When asked what the film was about, one child said it was "a world within a world".

Most children thought the film was about life and couldn't understand why it was titled STILL LIFE. Naturally, this could have been clarified beforehand by discussing how still life paintings might differ from still life films -- and by clarifying just what a still life was.

The film works best with an introduction to give children a "handle" with which to watch it, such as our suggestion that kids imagine they had shrunk in size. Other possibilities are to suggest that viewers have just landed on an unexplored planet; what does the geography look like? Or you may want to bring in a head of red cabbage and some cowrie and tapestry shells to discuss how changing the proportion changes what one sees; this would work very well with a related exploration of contemporary artists, particularly photorealists.

Poetry, sculpture, texture explorations, and discussions about perception are some of the activities for which this unassuming production can be used. You could ask young filmmakers or photographers to make their own studies of objects at close range -- their own still lifes. Fine for ages seven and up, particularly if you encourage kids to describe, out loud, what they are seeing as they watch the film.

S.R.



STILL WATERS 16 min Films Inc nonverbal liveaction 1964/USA (Elgin Ciampi)

The life cycle in a Florida lake is shot from the inhabitants' point of view -- mainly underwater. Accompanied by an unusual electronic score, fish, turtles, and frogs swim through the cloudy water. A large fish swallows a frog. Ducklings paddle along (seen from both above and below) and one apparently meets the same fate as the frog. Fish mate. Tiny hatchlings swim around in schools.. Two men approach in a noisy outboard (again seen from both above and below) and start to fish. A large fish gets caught on the line and, after a struggle, is pulled into the boat. Another, even larger fish is hooked, but after much thrashing it escapes to safety and the fishermen go away.

Both STILL WATERS and LIZARD raised similar issues with young viewers who were concerned that ducklings and butterflies (creatures they think beautiful or "cute") were eaten by the less appealing fish and lizards. The dramatic musical score for STILL WATERS gives an emotional and anthropomorphic overtone to the fish-eat-fish, fish-eat-frog ecology of the lake, making the struggle for survival seem a bit too human. On the other hand, the fish-eye view in STILL LIFE encourages an empathy with fish that the more detached camera in LIZARD doesn't attempt.

We showed STILL WATERS to a group of nine to eleven-year-olds in a rural area; they thoroughly enjoyed it. The boys made fishermen's assessments of the lake's potential ("great fishing") before the outboard ever appeared; girls were more concerned with the victims -- ducklings, frogs, and fish. With most groups, either rural or urban, there was a lively discussion afterward (as there was with LIZARD) about whether "all that eating" should have been in the film. Some kids thought not, but others pointed out that "it's what fish eat". When we tested it in urban areas, some young children found STILL WATERS a bit scary. None of the children commented on what we thought was a heavy-handed soundtrack.

The unusual point of view and the detailed photography make STILL WATERS a fine film for programs on ecology, nature studies, marine life, lifecycles, and food. Intriguing for people aged seven and up.

G.M.

SUN FLIGHT 6 min McDermott nonverbal cutout animation 1966/USA (Gerald McDermott)

"Greek legend tells us that Dedalus created a vast labyrinth for King Minos," reads the brief introduction to this abstract and dance-like treatment of the story of Dedalus and his son, Icarus.

Accompanied by a contemporary flute and harp score, and set against a vividly colored background, two white silhouette figures (the tall, bearded Dedalus and his son) ascend a long staircase to the throne room of King Minos. They apparently talk with the king who becomes threateningly large and quickly changes colors.

Banished to the very labyrinth they constructed for the cruel king, father and son run through the network of mazes in search of a way out, but they find none. Eventually, some birds pass overhead and, with feathers they drop, Dedalus fashions wings for himself and his son. As they fly to freedom, Icarus soars too close to the sun. Suddenly his figure turns brown, withers, and falls slowly into the sea. Dedalus lands safely but sadly laments his son's death.

Before screening SUN FLIGHT, we asked children if they knew the legend. Those who did told us the story and we filled in any parts they left out; we told the entire story to groups who did not know it since the film depends on viewers' familiarity with the storyline.

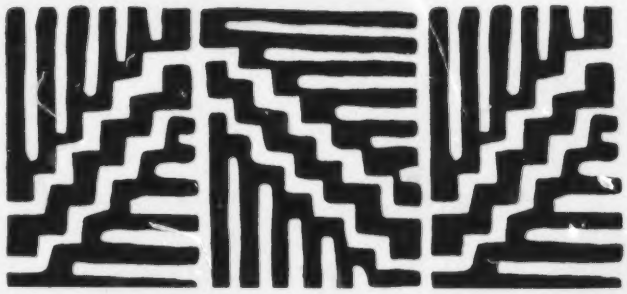
After seeing the film, some children commented that the images "were not realistic". We should have prepared them by saying that the images were silhouettes but they could no doubt figure out who was who. One child commented that "a myth doesn't have to show everything -- it's symbolic".

While some children said they would have liked to see the characters' faces so they could "know their emotions", one third grade was so moved by this "sad" film that they related sad personal experiences, such as family deaths, during the discussion which followed.

SUN FLIGHT is difficult for under eights, but when children are familiar with the story (and are encouraged to verbalize what is happening during the screening), it's an effective lead-in for activities involving collage, storytelling, mime, dance, or discussing myths or feelings with children over eight. With teenagers and adults, it might be interesting to compare Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts", Bruegel's The Fall of Icarus (the painting Auden refers to in his poem), and SUN FLIGHT -- after reading Bulfinch's version of the myth -- to see how different artists, using different mediums, have treated or recreated the original tale.

S.R.

16 young viewers



CONTRIBUTORS

Gina Michaels, an artist and free-lance writer, has conducted over two-hundred film evaluations with children.

Sue Reed, a Theater/Communications major from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, worked as an MCC intern during the Fall 1979 semester and conducted over one-hundred film evaluations with children.

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